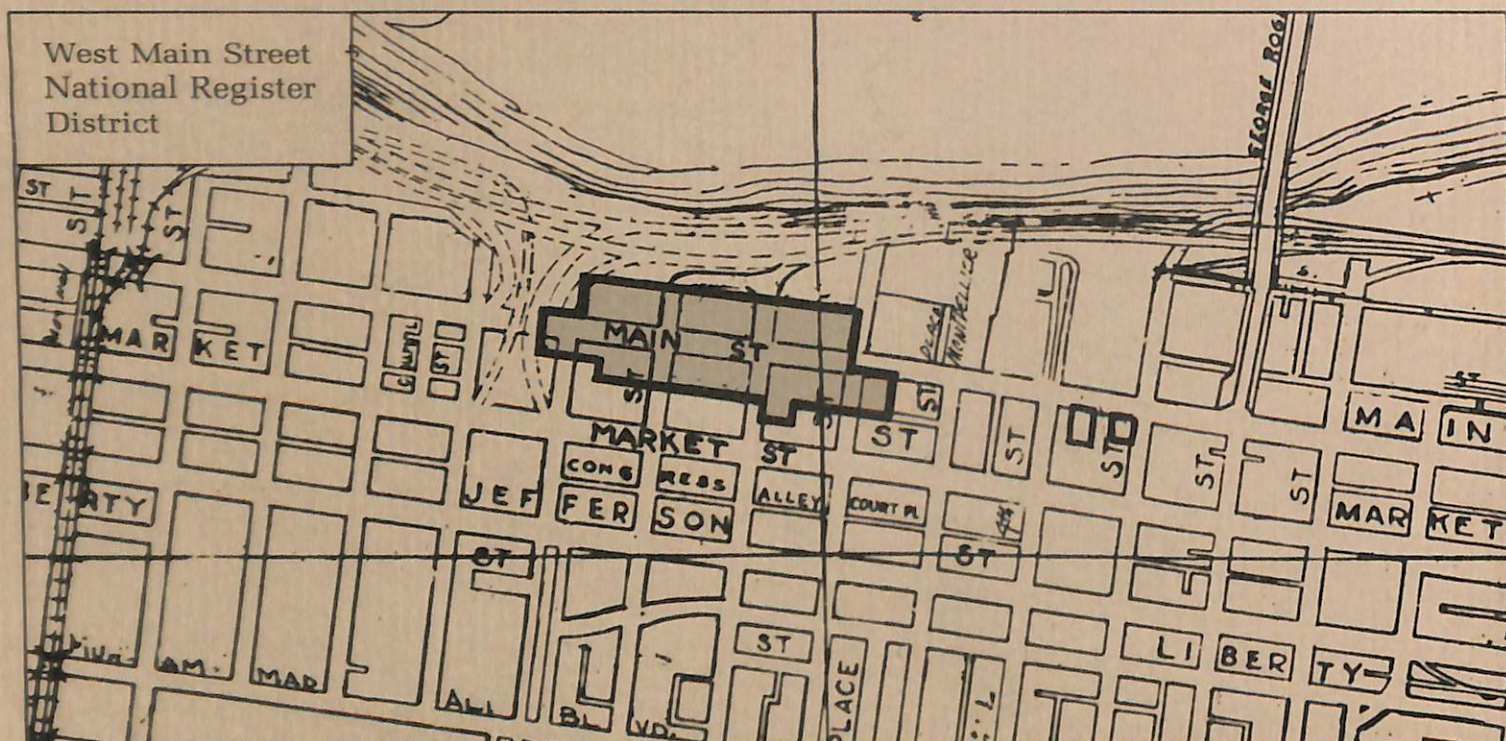




WEST MAIN STREET

The Victorian, cast-iron facades of the commercial structures which line West Main Street are the second largest and finest collection remaining in the United States; only New York City's is recognized as superior. One reason that Louisville has such an outstanding distinction is that the first successful plate-glass manufacturing plant in the country was in New Albany, Indiana, just across the river. The curtain wall created with cast iron allows the maximum wall surface to be opened with glass since it bears no weight. The availability of plate glass as well as the many local foundries, thus made cast iron storefront construction a local natural.

The majority of buildings on Main Street date from 1880-1900. There are perhaps a half dozen which

would be considered non-contributive to the district and thus ineligible for the investment tax credits. The remaining hundred or so create a consistent, zero setback display of rhythmic Victorian facades.

West Main Street has seen a remarkable renaissance in the past ten years. Major redevelopment was begun on Main Street in 1977 when the City's Museum of History and Science moved into the Carter Dry Goods Building. The renovation of this spectacular structure won national and international design attention. Most buildings have been renovated as office space, but retail establishments are slowly finding their way to the first floors of Main Street buildings. The Kentucky Center for the Arts and the new Humana Tower will only serve to strengthen this trend.



While the upper floors of all of these buildings remain intact, the ground level fronts vary. The colonial treatment found in the second building from the left is highly discouraged.



The four-story building on the left was originally identical to the next three which have recently been renovated using the investment tax credit. The former might by now have achieved its own significance.



The right half of this four-bay building is an excellent example of early inappropriate window infill. It represents a prime opportunity for rehabilitation.

Although residential development on Main Street has long been discussed, only a handful of units exist. Perhaps with the newly renovated Abell Elevator Building on East Main in Phoenix Hill, the Levy Brothers Building one block off West Main at Third Street, and the revived riverfront development studies, all of which include residential development, we will begin to see more loft apartments and townhouses in this district.

The rehabilitation of warehouse buildings is one of the most easily certified projects. Warehouse space rarely includes more than a staircase, front office, and four walls. Therefore, the architect is free to design almost anything, with sensitivity, within those walls. The exterior of the warehouse may cause some design concern. If the first floor was altered more than 50 years ago, the Department of the Interior may require that it remain intact as an example of the historical development of commercial buildings. A historic photograph for accurate restoration or a particularly sensitive contemporary re-do may allow the developer more flexibility.